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## MALAYSIAN CHINESE STORIES OF HARD WORK: FOLKLORE AND CHINESE WORK VALUES

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### ABSTRACT

*The Chinese, especially overseas Chinese and particularly the Malaysian Chinese, are well known for being hardworking and for their economic success. A certain degree of stereotyping is present here, of course, but Chinese success stories are certainly inspirational. This article demonstrates that Chinese folk narratives may have contributed to moulding the hardworking and entrepreneurial characteristics of the Chinese. Folklore, particularly folk narrative, plays a number of functions in non-literate societies, such as entertainment, validation of culture and the transmission of values. One of the major functions of folklore in non-literate societies is value transmission. In a modern society, folklore can perform the same function, although the transmission may be in the form of a book or a digital animation. To attempt to "scientifically" show that the Malaysian Chinese are likely to be influenced by these materials, this study analyses folk narratives that are commonly available in Chinese children's textbooks used in Chinese primary schools. The tales transmit values such as diligence, determination (especially in learning), loyalty, creativity, courage and to some extent, shrewdness, which are important to economic success.*

**Keywords:** Malaysian Chinese, folklore, work ethics, Chinese work values, entrepreneurship

The Chinese, especially overseas Chinese, are well known for being hardworking and entrepreneurial (Voon 2012: 101). In 1894, Arthur Smith painted a picture of hardworking Chinese in all walks of life in China in his book *Chinese Characteristics*: "They practically never stay idle but work all day long" (Smith 1894: 27–34). A certain degree of stereotyping is present here, of course, but Malaysian Chinese<sup>1</sup> success stories, such as: Wee Kheng Chiang, the founder of United Overseas Bank in Singapore; Lim Goh Tong, the founder of Genting Group;<sup>2</sup> Aw Boon Haw, the founder of Red Tiger Balm and Sin Chew Daily; and Lee Yan Nian, the founder of Lee Rubber Co., are certainly inspirational (Lam 2012; Voon 2012; 莫顺宗 2010; 陈星

南 2010). These are but a few well-known examples of successful entrepreneurs. There is no doubt that the Malaysian Chinese are a successful minority community in all walks of life (Voon 2012: 101–118). Their success is often attributed to the values that this article wishes to explore.

Many studies about Malaysian Chinese entrepreneurship and economic success are inspired by Weber's attack on Confucians' lack of capitalist spirit. These studies aim to either prove Weber right or wrong (e.g., Wu Ming Chu 1995). In this short article, the author first notes that folklore may play an important part in shaping the work values of the Malaysian Chinese and in making them a successful community in general. Sartor (2011) hinted that Chinese literature and folklore may be sources for understanding why the Chinese work so hard. Confucianism may be the most influential Chinese ideology, but the Chinese are exposed to more than Confucian ideas. Taoism, Buddhism and Communism, for example, have greatly influenced Chinese culture, and all of these elements are reflected in Chinese folklore. Folklore integrates, neutralises and harmonises different elements into one system. At times, the elements can be logically contradictory, but people live with them quite comfortably. The best evidence of this is Chinese folk religions, which are influenced by all of the major Chinese religions and ideologies, such as Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and even Islam and Christianity.

In this article, the author analyses some Chinese folk narratives that are commonly found in the Chinese language textbooks used in Chinese primary schools and stories from some children's books to illustrate a point. For many years, more than 90 percent of Chinese children have been enrolled in the Chinese primary school system; thus, it can be inferred that the Malaysian Chinese have frequent contact with these stories. Chinese children are familiar with these stories and are subject to their influence from a young age. It is reasonable to argue that the Chinese value system is influenced by these stories.

## **DEFINITIONS AND GENRES**

Since the British scholar William Thomas coined the term "folklore" to replace "popular antiquities" and "popular literature" in 1846, the term has been defined in many ways (Dundes 1965: 4–6). Literally, the term consists of two parts: "folk" and "lore." Some of the definitions emphasise the "folk," whereas others focus on the "lore."

One of the most influential definitions of folklore accepted by many folklorists today is Dundes' definition, which emphasises the lore. According to Dundes (1965: 3):

Folklore includes myths, legends, folktales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, tongue-twisters, and greeting and leave-taking formulas (e.g., See you later, alligator). It also includes folk costume, folk dance, folk drama (and mime), folk art, folk beliefs (or superstition), folk medicine, folk instrumental music (e.g., fiddle tunes), folksongs (e.g., lullabies, ballads), folk speech (e.g., slang), folk similes (e.g., blind as a bat), folk metaphors (e.g., to paint the town red), and names (e.g., nicknames and place names)...<sup>3</sup>

This list is long, yet it is not exhaustive. The most important criterion in defining folklore is that it is transmitted orally (1965: 1).

However, not everything that is transmitted orally is folklore, and not all folklore is transmitted orally (1965: 25). There are some genres of folklore, such as autograph-book verse, book marginalia, epitaphs and traditional letters, which are transmitted in written rather than oral form. Some folklore, such as folk dance, games and gestures, may arguably be transmitted through observation rather than orally (1965: 1–2). Thomson (1946: 5) notes that, "It is impossible to make a complete separation of the written and oral traditions." This separation is difficult for two reasons. First, some tales may be collected and written. Second, written stories may be passed on through word of mouth and become oral stories. Another important feature of folklore is the existence of multiple versions. It can be difficult to determine which the original version is because the author or creator is unknown.

In China, folklore as a subject of study or an academic discipline is a relatively recent enterprise that can be traced to the folksong movement (歌谣运动) in 1918 and the subsequent interest in myths in the 1930s (林分份 2007). This latter case was largely a reaction to Western influence during the May Fourth Movement.<sup>4</sup>

However, after the May Fourth Movement, the definition of folk slowly changed (吕微 2007). Due to the communist influence in Mainland China, the concept of folk was used to refer to the working class or the workers. However, this use is regarded as unsatisfactory by some scholars, especially after the policy of openness in 1979, and Zhong Jing Wen (钟敬

文) adopted Dundes' definition in 1983. Currently, Dundes' definition of folk is generally accepted by Chinese scholars. Folk simply refers to a group of people who share at least one common factor (Dundes 1965: 2). In this sense, the Malaysian Chinese are folk. It is also now generally agreed that folk literature<sup>5</sup> includes *shen hua* (神话; myths), *chuan shuo* (传说; legends), *min jian gu shi* (民间故事; folktales), *xiao hua* (笑话; jokes), *ge yao* (歌谣; folksongs and rhymes), *yan yu* (谚语; proverbs), *xie hou yu* (歇后语; a type of humorous saying), *xu shu shi* or *shi* (叙述诗/史诗; epics) and *xi qu* (戏曲; folk dramas and music) (鹿忆鹿 1998: 3).

One important point is that folklore changes in the process of transmission. Thus, the existence of slightly different versions of a story is a unique feature of folklore.

## VALUE TRANSMISSION

Folklore, particularly folk narrative, plays a number of functions in non-literate societies, such as entertainment, validation of culture and the transmission of values. However, the functions of folklore may depend on the social context (Bascom 1965). One of the major functions of folklore in non-literate societies is the transmission of values. However, it should be recognised that the relationship between these functions and any one particular item of folklore varies according to social context and that these functions may be interrelated. According to Dundes (1965: 279):

Different types of folklore can share similar, if not identical, functions... The function is the same; the form is different. It is equally important to realise that any one item of folklore may have several different functions... The form is the same; the function is different. One cannot always tell from form alone what the associated contextual function is. Functional data must, therefore, be recorded when the item is collected. An item once removed from its social context and published in this way deprives the scientific folklorist of an opportunity to understand why the particular item was used in a particular situation to meet a particular need.

In an oral culture, folklore is an important pedagogic material for teaching the young people the community's traditions and transmitting important values to them (Penjore 2005: 53). The folk narratives in Chinese language

textbooks certainly function to preserve the Chinese values that are important to the Malaysian Chinese. It is interesting that oral folk narratives, especially folktales, often contain layers of meanings. These layers allow the listener to explore the reasoning more deeply and make learning interesting (Tingoy et al. 2006). Russell (2002: 2) notes that although folk stories do not lecture, when someone hears or reads a folk story, he or she realises the moral message. Thus, folk stories make very good material for moral education. While reading, listening and at times, even watching animations or other performances that tell these stories, children are not only entertained but also acquire the values embedded in the stories.

## **CHINESE STORIES AND VALUE TRANSMISSION**

In the following sections, some Chinese folk stories will be analysed to show how they transmit the desired work values. It is hoped that this analysis will convince readers that Chinese folklore is a good explanation for the mind-boggling success of the Chinese.

The stories are mostly taken from Chinese language textbooks used in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and beyond that were published mainly by the Malaya Press Sdn Bhd, although a few were published by Pelangi Press and Sasbadi Press. A few stories are taken from other children's storybooks when it is necessary to illustrate a point. The author will not tediously cite the source of each story because these stories are so commonly known to any Chinese speaker; further, these stories are taken from almost 50 books. For the benefit of those who would like to read them in their "original form,"<sup>6</sup> these stories can easily be found in Chinese language textbooks and storybooks such as Leong (2006).

We can summarise the work values that contribute to the Malaysian Chinese success as the following: diligence, reliability (in human relations), cleverness (willingness to learn, be creative and compete effectively) and courage (Voon 2012).

## **DILIGENCE AND DETERMINATION**

There are many Chinese folk narratives that encourage people to be diligent. Let us consider the following example of a Chinese folktale in full. Subsequent tales will not be presented in full for reasons of space constraints.

Long ago, there was a lazy rice farmer. One day, after he had worked for a little while in the hot sun, he went to take a break underneath a shady tree not far from his rice paddies. While he was leaning against the tree trunk, closing his eyes to rest, suddenly he was disturbed by a loud thump! A rabbit had crashed into the tree on which he was resting. A wild animal had been chasing the rabbit, and the rabbit died from the impact with the tree. The farmer was thrilled at his unexpected fortune.

He picked up the rabbit and took it home, even though there was work for him in the rice paddies. He cleaned the rabbit and cooked the meat for supper. Then he took the rabbit skin to the market and sold it for a good price. The farmer was very happy. He thought to himself, "Hmm, if I can find a rabbit every day, I will not only have delicious rabbit meat to eat, I will also have more money than I can make working as a farmer in the hot sun!"

The next day, the lazy farmer didn't work in his rice paddies. He sat under the same tree and waited for another rabbit to come. But no rabbit came crashing into the tree.

From then on, he waited under the tree every day. He completely ignored his farmwork. Eventually, his paddies grew full of weeds. When his friends finally talked him into going back to work, he was still full of hope, saying, "If I can get a rabbit every day, it is much more comfortable than working in the hot sun."

In the end, he had nothing—neither a rabbit nor a grain of rice from his rice paddies.<sup>7</sup>

Russell (2002: 2) notes that, "Although this story doesn't lecture, when someone hears it or reads it, he or she will realise that one must work in order to reap the harvest." In another story, three lazy sons were told by their father from his sick bed that there was gold buried in their family paddy field. Instantly, the sons went digging in the field. To their disappointment, they found no gold. Because they had loosened the land, their father told them to sow some seeds. Months later, the paddy had grown, and the field had become golden. At this point the sons realised what gold their father was talking about. Chinese children are constantly reminded to make themselves useful in folk narratives. For example, the story *Why Slaughter the Pig?*<sup>8</sup> sarcastically explains why useful animals such as the

dog, the cock, the horse and the cow are spared from the New Year feast, but the good-for-nothing pig, which only sleeps and eats, is not. Therefore, one who is not useful is only meant to be eaten.

Determination and diligence can make impossible things possible. The fable of the two monks—one poor and one rich—who want to go to the South Sea to fulfil their prayers is a good warning to those who only plan but do not take action. In the story, the rich monk plans extensively and makes preparations for his long trip. However, the poor monk embarks on the journey with only a water jug and a rice bowl and completes the trip. This story of the poor monk is similar to the story of many successful Chinese entrepreneurs, such as Wee Kheng Chiang (Lam 2012).

When considering determination, there is no more famous story among the Chinese than the Chinese fable about the "foolish" old man who tried to remove a mountain from in front of his house. His neighbours ridiculed him and told him that it was impossible for an old man like him to remove the tall mountain. He replied by saying, "When we make up our mind on something, it is not impossible. If I cannot finish the work, my sons will continue, if they fail to complete the work, my grandsons will take over. One day the mountain will be removed." This tale was first recorded three thousand years ago in the Pre-Qin period text *Lie Zi*<sup>9</sup> (列子). The Taoist philosopher uses this story to show that one can overcome any problem or difficulty through sheer determination and perseverance. Does this not sound similar to many familiar stories about Chinese family enterprises that were developed over many generations?

A Chinese myth also tells of ten suns in the sky. People suffer because of the extreme heat. A brave, giant archer shoots nine of them, and people live happily after that. This myth stresses the possibility of overcoming natural difficulties through human effort (段宝林 2005: 21). There are many tales such as this in Chinese folklore.

## **DETERMINATION AND LEARNING**

In addition to working hard, Smith (1894: 27–34) says that Chinese children study hard. Again, the overseas Chinese are well known for their concern and support for their own and the community's children.

In particular, the Chinese believe that practice makes perfect. As long as someone continues doing something, he will be good at it one day. There are stories that expound this idea. For example, an archer was very proud of his archery skill. An old man challenged him, saying that it was nothing

special because with enough practice, anyone could be good at anything. Then the old man demonstrated that he could pour oil through the hole in a coin without touching the coin at all. Everyone, including the archer, was amazed. The old man told the archer that it was nothing special because practice had made him perfect. In another tale, the Taoist philosopher Lie Zi again used a fable to present his idea about learning, but he did it indirectly by referring to the way an archer learns archery. Concentration and persistence are the keys to acquiring skills and many other things in life.

There are also many role models in the history of China, and their experiences have been adapted into what the Chinese call historical tales. In one tale, Confucius travelled thousands of miles to ask Lao Zi to be his teacher. Lao Zi was overwhelmed because, at this time, Confucius was already a well-known teacher himself. Confucius explained that there could be no end to learning, and he believed that he could still improve under Lao Zi's guidance. In fact, Confucius was well known for saying that when he walked with two other persons, one must be capable of teaching him something (三人行必有我师). In a historical tale, Le Yang Zi (乐羊子), another Chinese philosopher, was motivated by his wise wife to study hard. Once, Le Yang Zi found a piece of gold on the ground; he happily brought it back to give to his wife. However, his wife told him that a noble man would not keep what did not belong to him. Le Yang Zi had to put the gold back where he had found it. Later, Le Yang Zi left home to learn from a teacher in another town. He missed his wife, so he went home to see her. His wife was weaving cloth at the time. When she saw Le Yang Zi, she picked up the scissors and told Le Yang Zi that learning was just like weaving; if she cut the cloth, then all her effort would be wasted. Le Yang Zi was enlightened by his wife's words. He went back to study for seven more years without going home at all and finally became a great scholar. Yang Zi (扬朱) is another learned person. He once lost a goat and sent his servants to look for it. They came back to report that they could not find the goat because there were too many junctions. This saddened Yang Zi. His friend was curious because it was only a goat that was lost. Yang Zi explained that he was not saddened about the loss of his goat, but he was thinking about the learning process. There were too many pathways in learning that he could take, so he could be lost in the process and lose track of his learning effort. Therefore, one must concentrate in learning and not be easily distracted.

Other role models include Li Bai, the famous Tang Dynasty Chinese poet who was inspired by an old lady who tried to grind an iron rod into a needle; Yue Fie<sup>10</sup> (岳飞), who could not afford paper and ink and instead practiced writing on sand; and Wang Xian Zhi<sup>11</sup> (王献之), the son of the



well-known calligrapher Wang Xi Zhi (王羲之), who used an entire vat of ink to practice calligraphy until he became as good as his father. These tales are often used to encourage students to persevere in learning, even in extreme conditions.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to hard work, a good learning environment is emphasised in Chinese folklore. Mencius or Meng Zi (孟子) was a clever boy, and he observed and learned what his neighbour did. He and his mother first lived near a slaughterhouse and then by a graveyard. Meng Zi imitated what his neighbours did, and his mother felt that this was not good. They moved three times until they finally settled next to a school. From that time onwards, Meng Zi loved reading.

## **INTELLIGENCE AND CREATIVITY**

The tales described here show that the Chinese are hardworking, but they do not demonstrate the type of cleverness and resourcefulness that is so necessary in business. However, the bold and creative Chinese entrepreneurs certainly show these characteristics (Voon 2012).

There are common Chinese folk stories that encourage Chinese children to be bold and creative. Let us consider the following tales that praise intelligence and ridicule foolishness. These tales paint a different picture of the Chinese.

In a folktale, a fool was ridiculed for counting his cows while sitting on the back of one of them. He found that one of his cows was missing; however, when he got down from the cow and counted again, the count was correct. Another tale ridicules a fool who was cutting down a branch while sitting on it and ended up falling from the tree. In two other tales, the characters were intelligent in solving mathematical problems. Cao Chong<sup>13</sup> (曹冲) was a clever boy; once, someone gave his father (a king) an elephant, and his father wished to know its weight, but there was no scale large enough to weigh it. Cao Chong solved the problem by first putting the elephant in a boat and marking the water level. Then, he put stones in the boat to the same water level. The total weight of the stones was the weight of the elephant. In another mathematical tale, a rich father left seventeen horses to his three sons to be divided among them in the ratio of half to the eldest son, one-third to the second son and one-ninth to the youngest son. However, they were unable to divide the horses because half would be eight and a half horses. As they tried to divide the horses, an old man rode past on his horse. They decided to seek his help. The old man suggested that they

temporarily include his horse. Therefore, half would be nine horses, one-third would be six horses, one-ninth would be two horses, and the remaining horse would be returned to the old man.<sup>14</sup> In another tale, an old man used his observations to describe the appearance of a lost camel. All of these tales teach children to make appropriate observations and use their intellect to solve tricky problems.

The Chinese also have stories of quick, intelligent responses to crises, which are also needed in business. For example, Wen Yan Bo (文彦博) was playing ball with his friends. The ball went into a hole under a tree, and his friends could not get the ball out. The clever Wen Yen Bo quickly poured water into the hole, and the ball floated out.<sup>15</sup> Two other fables show that for thousands of years, the Chinese understood logic. In the first fable, a spear and shield seller claimed that his spears could pierce any shield and that his shields could block any weapon. He was asked to explain which of his weapons would prevail if one were to use his spear on his own shield. In the second fable, a man dropped his sword into the river. He quickly made a mark on the boat. When he was asked to explain his action, he said that he would look for his sword when the boat reached shallower water.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, we can ponder examples of quick, intelligent responses as well as foolish responses.

Quick responses may not always be the way to solve problems; rather, patience may be needed. In a tale told by Meng Zi,<sup>17</sup> a farmer tried to help some seedlings grow faster by pulling them up. The next day, all of the seedlings were dead.<sup>18</sup> The moral of the story is that one must be patient with nature, and a helping hand may backfire.

In a Chinese folktale, it was believed that if a young girl was not sent into the river to marry the river god every year, the river god would not be pleased, and there would be a great flood. This was actually a conspiracy among three elders of the town and a witch to cheat the town folk into offering them money along with the young girl every year. A new District Officer came to the town. He was asked by some town folk to solve this problem. That year, when they had selected the girl to offer to the river god, the District Officer stopped the ritual halfway and claimed that the girl was not pretty enough to please the river god. The witch told him that if they stopped, they would miss the deadline. The District Officer said that if that was the case, he needed to send her to the river god to inform him that they were trying to get a prettier girl for him. He threw the witch into the river. After a while, the District Officer pretended to be angry with the witch for being so late in replying with the river god's wish and wanted to send the

three elders to look for her. The three elders immediately knelt down and admitted that the whole thing was a fraud.<sup>19</sup>

Another variant of a trial tale<sup>20</sup> was the trial of a stone. A poor boy who sold *you tiao*<sup>21</sup> lost his money. He went to the court for justice. The judge ordered the large stone near his stall to be brought to the court for hearing. The people were curious, and the court became crowded. The judge told the crowd that whoever wanted to hear this trial would have to pay two small coins. Many people did, and one person's money was found to be oily. The judge ordered the person arrested and stated that he was the thief because the boy was selling oily *you tiao*.<sup>22</sup> There are many versions of the stone trial tale throughout China. In some tales, the culprit is not found, but the monies donated by the crowd are given to the victim as compensation (祁连休 2007: 1172–1175).

A final example that shows the shrewdness of the Chinese is based on the Chinese zodiac. Of the twelve zodiac animals, the rat is ranked first. Why is a small and weak animal ranked first? There are a few versions of the story of how the rat obtained its ranking. In one version, the rat told the god that he was the biggest among the animals selected. Of course, the god did not believe him. Rat asked the god to go to the people for judgement, and his request was granted. When the people saw the ox that the god wanted to rank first, there was no reaction. Then, the rat jumped onto the head of the ox, and the people all shouted, "Look, the rat is so huge!"<sup>23</sup> So the god ranked the rat first and the ox second. In another version, there was a race. When the animals reached the last stage of the race, they had to cross a river. The rat was not a good swimmer, but the ox was. The rat persuaded the ox to carry it because it was so small, and the ox agreed. Once they were almost at the bank, the rat jumped forward and won the race. Similarly, there are many stories of small Chinese firms that have ended up winning the business race by riding on the backs of other stronger firms or by deceiving others.

## RELIABILITY

The Chinese are shrewd, but they are also known to be reliable and loyal to friends and partners. These qualities are of utmost importance, especially in business partnerships and in the Chinese network, *Quanxi* (relationships or connections). Further, comity and courtesy have always been regarded as important virtues in Chinese culture, which is reflected in many of the

historical tales. Being courteous and practicing comity is a sign of being educated.

In a classical idiom/historical tale set during the Warring States period in China, there was a great general in the state of Zhao (赵国) who had won many battles. At that time, there was an official who was successful in a few diplomatic visits to a powerful neighbouring state of Qin (秦). Due to his diplomatic success, he was promoted to a position higher than the general's position. The general was very unhappy with this because he felt that he had fought his battles with his life. Knowing this, the official tried to avoid the general and was very polite to him. The official's friends were curious about why he was so afraid of a general who was ranked lower than him. He answered that he was not afraid of the general, but if he fought with the general, the strong Qin would take the opportunity to attack Zhao. When the general heard what the official said, he felt so ashamed of himself that he carried a thorny stick on his back and visited the official's home to ask for forgiveness. This story and the associated proverb, asking for forgiveness by carrying a thorny stick on one's back (负荆请罪), have been transmitted among the Chinese for thousands of years as the best model of humility, comity, tolerance and putting the country or community above personal interest.

In traditional Chinese culture, loyalty demands that one even sacrifice one's own life. In a historical tale, Xun Ju Bo (荀巨伯) went to see a friend who was sick in a faraway city. Coincidentally, during his visit, the city was attacked by a group of robbers. His friend told him to leave quickly, fearing that Xun Ju Bo might be killed by the robbers. However, Xun Ju Bo refused to leave his sick friend alone. The robbers were surprised to find Xun Ju Bo and asked him why he did not run away. Xun Ju Bo told them that he did not want to leave his sick friend alone. The robbers were so touched by what Xun Ju Bo did that they left the city unharmed.

*Kong Yong Left the Bigger Pears to His Brothers* is another famous classic Chinese historical tale. Kong Yong picked the smallest pear because he thought the bigger pears should be left to his brothers, who were older and physically bigger, even though he had the opportunity to pick before them. This tale is often used to teach children to not take advantage of a situation if they are allowed to go first.

Many Chinese tales stress the importance of staying united because unity means strength and division leads to weakness. For example, an old farmer taught his seven quarrelsome sons this principle by telling them to break chopsticks.<sup>24</sup> At first they were asked to break the chopsticks one by one, which they did quite easily. Then, they were told to put seven

chopsticks together and break them; now, they were unable to do so. In another tale, a blacksmith's tools<sup>25</sup> argued among themselves as to which was the most important tool. As they quarrelled, a piece of iron reminded them that if they did not work together, they would not be able to turn any iron into a useful artefact.

Persecution among brothers is also the theme of a historical tale in which the talented Cao Zhi (曹植) was asked by his jealous brother Cao Pi (曹丕), the king, to make a poem about brothers in seven steps. If he failed, he would be punished. Cao Zhi succeeded in doing so:

煮豆燃豆箕，豆在釜中泣  
本是同根生，相煎何太急

Zhu Dou Ran Dou Ji, Dou Zai Fu Zhong Qi Ben Shi Tong Gen Sheng, Xiang Jian He Tai Ji. In liberal translation:

Cook beans by burning beanstalk, the beans weep in the cauldron. Both come from the same root, why so rush in persecution.

From then on, Cao Zhi's brother stopped persecuting him. This poem and the associated story have been used by generations of Chinese to promote brotherly love. In fact, stories about the consequences of conflict between brothers are common in China (丁乃通 2008: 15, 22). These values are important to the success of family businesses.

In the story of *The Tiger and the Squirrel*,<sup>26</sup> the tiger "kindly" set free a squirrel that had offended him. As a result of this act, the squirrel was later able to save the tiger's life when it was trapped by a hunter. The squirrel released him from the trap by biting the rope and breaking the net. These tales tell us that bigger and stronger persons may need smaller and weaker persons on some occasions; hence, they should be kind to the small and the weak, and to the smaller and weaker party. It is important to be courteous and reciprocate. Consequently, large Chinese corporations are not known to try to monopolise; they often help smaller firms and give them breathing space. As a result, the Chinese business world is often a network of large and small businesses.

## CONCLUSION

The folk narratives analysed in this paper are but a few selected examples of tales that transmit the type of values, such as diligence, reliability and cleverness, that are important to entrepreneurship and to success in the Chinese business world. Further studies are required to prove the premise of this paper. More research could be designed, for example, to examine the extent of the influence of Chinese folklore on Chinese businessmen. Clearly, there are sufficient grounds to proceed in this direction.

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## NOTES

\* See Hoon Peow holds a PhD in Sociology and Anthropology from International Islamic University Malaysia, Master of Philosophy in Sociology from University of Malaya and LLB (Hons) from University of Glamorgan (now University of South Wales). He has an extensive work experience in the education industry with exposure in both academic and business operations. He is currently Executive Vice President, SEGi University Group. He manages research and other academic activities of SEGi University. Prior to joining SEGi, he has held top management positions in other educational institutions. He has wide academic interest in humanities and social sciences. Although he is a full time manager, he is active in research and publishing. He has published many books and papers locally and internationally with reputable publishers and journals. He has also presented papers in local and international conferences.

1. The Malaysian Chinese include Singaporeans before Singapore left Malaysia.
2. <http://www.genting.com/>.
3. The list continues.
4. The May Fourth Movement was an anti-imperialist, cultural and political movement in early modern China that began on 4 May 1919.
5. Chinese scholars prefer to call folk narrative "folk literature" and other types of folklore *min su* (民俗; folklore).
6. In the understanding of folkloristic studies, there is never an original form as folklore changes in the process of transmission.
7. Tale-type D 1280 (all D tale types refer to *Ding Nai Tong's* Type Index; see bibliography), AT 1645B and motif J702. This is categorised as a story about fools

by Ting Nai Tong. This story was recorded by Han Fei Zi, a famous ancient Chinese philosopher. For the benefit of non-folklorists, a folktale index is a common tool used by folklorists to classify tales for analysis and comparison. The tale types are included here mainly for folklorists' interest.

8. Tale type D 2205\*.
9. The book is named after the author, Lie Zi.
10. Yue Fie was a well-known general in the Song Dynasty. He is well known for both is knowledge of the art of war and his poetry.
11. Wang Xi Zhi was a well-known calligrapher of the Jin Dynasty.
12. Motif W41§ (new motif).
13. Brother of Cao Pi (曹丕) and Cao Zhi (曹植). He was also a son of Cao (曹操), the King of Wei state (魏国) during the Three Kingdoms period.
14. Tale type D 1030.
15. Tale type AT 232D and new motif H964.1§.
16. Tale type D 1278.
17. Next to Confucius, Meng Zi is considered to be the second greatest Confucian.
18. Tale type D 1241B.
19. Variant of tale type D 926.
20. Type D926.
21. A type of Chinese pastry that needs to be deep fried. Type D 926D\*.
22. This evidence is circumstantial and would not be admissible in a modern court of law.
23. Tale type D 111C\*.
24. Tale type D 910F. There are variants of this tale that involve breaking arrows.
25. Tale type D 293. There are variants of this tale that involve quarrelsome body organs.
26. Variant of tale type D 75. In the Aesop fable version, the animals are Lion and Rat.

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